



Pacific Northwest Region
Malheur National Forest
541-575-3000
www.fs.usda.gov/malheur

FIRE UPDATE

Bald Sisters Fire Information: <http://inciweb.nwcg.gov/incident/4055/>

September 23, 2014

Bald Sisters Fire spreads in Reynolds Creek

JOHN DAY, OR – The Bald Sisters Fire was active through Sunday afternoon and evening, creating smoke columns up to a mile high and spreading flames further west along Reynolds Creek, and north to Forest Road 183. The fire is currently burning about a half mile east and inside of the contingency line at North Reynolds Creek.

A moderate amount of smoke settled into the John Day Valley yesterday, with air quality measured as “good” by monitors placed in John Day and Unity. A cold front brought multiple lightning strikes across Grant County west of the fire area, with new smoke reports being investigated this morning. Cloud cover overnight prevented infrared detection the fire’s expanded perimeter.

More than a half-inch of rain has been measured since yesterday near Deardorff Mountain, on the southeast side of the fire, and will limit fire growth and smoke today. However, the rain was not enough to clear visible smoke from the air.

Winds will be out of the south today, causing smoke to again settle into drainages and valleys north of the fire tonight, in Unity and Baker City. Southerly winds will shift to out of the north tomorrow evening, moving smoke back over the fire and away from John Day, Prairie City, Unity and Baker City.

Contingency lines were established and reinforced last month by firefighters, who thinned trees and surface vegetation along Forest Roads 2635 and 2652, and County Road 13, to slow any approaching fire. Fire crews have been positioned to respond as needed to keep the fire in check along these defensible lines, and to protect the Elkhorn Communication Site and power lines.

Fire resources on the ground yesterday included a 20-person handcrew, 5 engines, and 2 water tenders, along with a field observer and several fire commanders. In light of changing conditions, many of those resources are being released today, and will be available to respond to new fire starts.

“We are in Day 53 of the fire, and our safety record has been good,” said Todd Gregory, Assistant Fire Management Officer for the Malheur National Forest. The Forest will hold a community briefing tomorrow night, Wednesday, September 24, from 7:00 -9:00 p.m. at the Prairie City Community Center to provide an overview of the fire’s progression, its management, and an outlook into the fall.



for the greatest good

NEWS RELEASE

(continued)

At this time, an Area Closure remains in effect to ensure public safety. Area Closures remain in effect for not only the Bald Sisters Fire, but also the South Fork Complex at this time. The current Area Closure Orders, along with maps, are available at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/alerts/malheur/alerts-notice>.

The Bald Sisters Fire closure covers an area around Baldy Mountain in the Inventoried Roadless Area:

- Starting at the Malheur National Forest (MNF) boundary and Forest Road (FR) 2635 in Sec. 30, T 13S, R 35E to the intersection with Forest Service Road (FSR) 101 in Sec. 16, T 13S, R 35 ½ E.
- East to intersection with FSR 2652 in Sec. 9, T 13S, R 35 ½ E.
- South to FSR 600 in Sec. 9, T14S R35 ½ E;
- Southwesterly to FSR 268 in Sec. 16, T14S, R 35 ½ E
- Southwesterly to FSR 13 in Sec. 17, T 14S, R 35 ½ E.
- North and northwesterly on FSR 13 to the MNF boundary in Sec. 31, T 13S, and R 35E.
- North along MNF boundary to starting point at FSR 2635.
- Perimeter roads open for through traffic.

Forest Officials encourage everyone to be safe and careful when recreating, hunting, or using the National Forest. **Please make sure your campfires are DEAD OUT before leaving their site;** the fire should be cold to the touch with no potential to ignite. Although temperatures are getting cooler at night, we are still in fire season; vegetation is still very dry, and the weather is still hot during the day.

FIRE RESTRICTIONS: The north half, including Blue Mountain and Prairie City Ranger Districts, of the Malheur National Forest are in Phase A of the Public Use Restrictions (PURs), which addresses use of campfires, chainsaws (firewood cutting), internal combustion engines, smoking, generators, and off-road/off-trail vehicle travel. The south half, including Emigrant Creek Ranger District, remains in Phase B of the PURs, which prohibits or restricts use of campfires, chainsaws (firewood cutting), internal combustion engines, smoking, generators, and off-road/off-trail vehicle travel. The specific PURs information can be found at this location: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/malheur/>.

The public is responsible for knowing if restrictions are in place and can obtain information through many avenues:

Call the Forest's offices or District offices at:

- Malheur National Forest/Blue Mountain Ranger District: 541-575-3000
- Prairie City Ranger District: 541-820-3800
- Emigrant Creek Ranger District: 541-573-4300

OR Visit the Forests website at: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/malheur/>.

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